

House Resolution

No. 24

Introduced by Assembly Member Bradford

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August 14, 2013

House Resolution No. 24—Relative to Hall of Fame baseball player Jackie Robinson.

- 1 WHEREAS, Jack Roosevelt “Jackie” Robinson was born in
- 2 Cairo, Georgia, on January 31, 1919, to a family of sharecroppers.
- 3 His mother, Mallie Robinson, single-handedly raised Jackie and
- 4 her four other children. In the early 1920s, the family moved to
- 5 Pasadena, where they were the only black family on their block,
- 6 and the prejudice they encountered only strengthened their bond;
- 7 and
- 8 WHEREAS, In Pasadena, Jackie Robinson attended John Muir
- 9 High School and Pasadena Junior College, where he was an
- 10 excellent athlete and played four sports--football, basketball, track,

1 and baseball--and was named the region's Most Valuable Player
2 in baseball in 1938; and

3 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson continued his education at the
4 University of California, Los Angeles, where he became the
5 university's first student to win varsity letters in four sports, and
6 where, in 1941, despite his athletic success, he was forced to leave
7 UCLA just shy of his graduation due to financial hardship; and

8 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson moved to Honolulu, Hawaii,
9 where he played football for the semiprofessional Honolulu Bears,
10 but his season with the Bears was cut short when the United States
11 entered World War II; and

12 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson served as a second lieutenant in
13 the United States Army from 1942 to 1944. He was arrested and
14 court martialed during boot camp after he refused to move to the
15 back of a segregated bus during training; and

16 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson was later acquitted of the charges
17 and received an honorable discharge. His courage and moral
18 objection to the segregation he encountered were precursors to the
19 impact he would have on major league baseball; and

20 WHEREAS, After his discharge from the Army in 1944, Jackie
21 Robinson began playing in the Negro Leagues, but he was soon
22 chosen by Branch Rickey, the President and General Manager of
23 the Brooklyn Dodgers, to help integrate major league baseball;
24 and

25 WHEREAS, He joined the all-white Montreal Royals, a farm
26 team for the Brooklyn Dodgers, in 1945, and subsequently moved
27 to Florida in 1946 to begin spring training with the Royals, and
28 played his first game on March 17 of that year; and

29 WHEREAS, Despite racial abuse, particularly at away games,
30 Jackie Robinson had an outstanding start with the Royals during
31 the 1946 season, leading the International League with a .349
32 batting average. This excellent year led to his promotion to the
33 Brooklyn Dodgers, and his debut game on April 15, 1947, marked
34 the first time in the 20th century that an African American athlete
35 played in the major leagues; and

36 WHEREAS, Even though some of his Dodger teammates
37 objected to Jackie Robinson's joining the team, Dodgers manager
38 Leo Durocher informed them that he would sooner trade them than
39 Jackie Robinson. Durocher's loyalty to Jackie Robinson set the
40 tone for the rest of Robinson's Dodger career; and

1 WHEREAS, The harassment of Jackie Robinson continued,
2 however, most notably by the Philadelphia Phillies and their
3 manager Ben Chapman. During one infamous game, Chapman
4 and his team shouted epithets at Robinson from their dugout, while
5 many players on opposing teams threatened not to play against the
6 Dodgers; and

7 WHEREAS, Many others defended Jackie Robinson's right to
8 play in the major leagues, including National League President
9 Ford Frick, Baseball Commissioner A.B. "Happy" Chandler, and
10 future Hall of Fame members Hank Greenberg and Harold "Pee
11 Wee" Reese; and

12 WHEREAS, In one incident, while fans harassed Jackie
13 Robinson from the stands, his teammate Pee Wee Reese walked
14 over and put his arm around Robinson, a gesture that has become
15 legendary in baseball history; and

16 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson succeeded in putting prejudice
17 and racial strife aside, and showed everyone what a talented player
18 he was; so much so, that in his first year, he hit 12 home runs and
19 helped the Dodgers win the National League pennant; and

20 WHEREAS, In that year, Jackie Robinson led the National
21 League in stolen bases and was selected as Rookie of the Year.
22 He continued to wow fans and critics alike with impressive feats,
23 such as an outstanding .342 batting average during the 1949 season,
24 the lead in stolen bases that year, and the National League's Most
25 Valuable Player Award; and

26 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson became a vocal champion for
27 African American athletes, civil rights, and other social and
28 political causes, so that, after baseball, he became active in business
29 and continued his work as an activist for social change; and

30 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson worked as an executive for the
31 Chock Full o'Nuts coffee company and restaurant chain, and helped
32 establish the Freedom National Bank. He also served on the board
33 of the NAACP until 1967 and was the first African American to
34 be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962. In 1972, the
35 Dodgers retired his uniform number of 42; and

36 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson retired on January 5, 1957, from
37 professional baseball with an impressive career batting average of
38 .311, and in his later years, he continued to lobby for greater
39 integration in sports; and

1 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson died from heart problems and
2 diabetes complications on October 24, 1972, in Stamford,
3 Connecticut. He was survived by his wife, Rachel Isum Robinson,
4 a nursing student whom he had met at UCLA, and two of his three
5 children, Sharon and David; his oldest child, Jackie Jr., had died
6 in an automobile accident in 1971; and

7 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson's jersey number 42 was retired
8 leaguewide in 1997, and he remains the only player to have his
9 number retired leaguewide; and

10 WHEREAS, In 2004, Major League Baseball declared April 15
11 as Jackie Robinson Day, and since 2007 Major League Baseball
12 has celebrated Jackie Robinson Day by allowing every player to
13 wear jersey number 42. Therefore, it is altogether fitting to rename
14 former State Route 42 after Jackie Robinson; and

15 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson's life and legacy will be
16 remembered as one of the most important in American history. In
17 1997, the world celebrated the 50th anniversary of his breaking
18 major league baseball's color barrier, and in doing so, we honored
19 the man who stood defiantly against those who would work against
20 racial equality and acknowledged the profound influence of one
21 man's life on American culture; and

22 WHEREAS, On the anniversary of Jackie Robinson's historic
23 debut, all major league baseball teams across the nation celebrated
24 this milestone; also that year, the United States Postal Service
25 honored Robinson by making him the subject of a commemorative
26 postage stamp; and on that Tuesday, April 15, 1997, President Bill
27 Clinton paid tribute to Jackie Robinson at Shea Stadium in New
28 York in a special ceremony; now, therefore, be it

29 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California*, That the
30 Assembly urges the Cities of Los Angeles, Inglewood, Downey,
31 South Gate, and Norwalk, and the County of Los Angeles to work
32 together to rename Manchester Avenue and Firestone Boulevard
33 (formerly State Route 42) after the Hall of Fame baseball player
34 Jackie Robinson; and be it further

35 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
36 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.